

THE FALL OF MAN.

S E R M O N,

ON

ECCL. vii. 29.



*God made man upright; but they have sought out
many inventions.*

LONDON:

Sold by **BUTTON, CONDER, CHAPMAN, and MATTHEWS:** LUCKMAN and SUFFIELD, and MERRIDEW, Coventry.

M,DCC,XCVII.

No. V.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 29.

God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

THESE are the words of Solomon, the King of Israel; and appear to be the result of much observation and experience. Possessed of superior talents, and placed in the highest station, he resolved to attain the utmost degree of wisdom; but his success was not equal to his wishes. He perceived, however, the extreme folly of having so many wives and concubines; and says, verse 28.—“One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found; that is, among his courtiers and flatterers, one man, perhaps, among a thousand he found, on whom he could depend; but, not one among his thousand wives and concubines. “But this only, saith he, have I found—that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” This he was sure of. He had no doubt respecting this; and to this apostasy of man he traces up all the evils he saw and felt.

These words represent two things—namely,

The original, and apostate state of man.

First, Let us consider the *original state of man.* “God made man upright.”

Man, signifies the first man, Adam; the father and head of all men; in whom the whole human race was included. God *made* him; “formed him out of the dust of the earth; and breathed into his nostrils the
breath

breath of life," Gen. ii. 7. God made him *upright*; this does not mean in his bodily stature, but in the frame and disposition of his mind. "God created man in his own image, in his own likeness." He was naturally and habitually righteous. His heart was properly disposed towards God; with a love of good, and a hatred of evil. The law was not written for him in tables of stone, but it was written upon his heart.

His *mind* was endued with true knowledge, (Col. iii. 2.) He knew his maker. He knew his glorious perfections; his power, his wisdom, his holiness, and his goodness. He knew his relation to God, his duty to him, and his dependence on him. He saw the glory and goodness of God in his works. He studied them, that he might glorify God in them; hence we find him giving names to the creatures, which, in the original, shew that he had observed them, and understood their nature.

His *will* was conformed to the will of God. It had no such bias to evil as we now have; but it was disposed to comply with the divine will in all respects.

The *affections* of his soul were holy and heavenly. He loved God above all. He considered him as his supreme good, and the grand source of his happiness. He loved the creatures for God's sake; and all the beauty or sweetness he found in them, led him to adore and love his God the more.

In this state, man was truly blessed and honourable. His mind was calm. His conscience was easy. He knew no guilt. He felt no shame. He was a stranger to fear. No angry passions disturbed his soul. His body was free from disease and pain. He conversed with God, and was as happy as paradise could make him.

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Had he continued in this state of uprightness for a certain time, he would, probably, have been translated, without pain or death, to a heavenly state, still happier; and all his posterity would have been confirmed in the same condition of holiness and happiness, without the danger of falling, as he did: for, as it is certain, that all mankind, descended from Adam, are involved in the consequences of his fall; we may justly conclude, that had he maintained his integrity, they would all have shared in the happy fruit of it. But alas, though “God made man upright—he hath sought out many inventions.” The crown is fallen from his head, the glory is departed from him.” This is a point which it greatly concerns us to know. This is one of the first principles of our religion, on which all the rest depend. “For if man is not at variance with his creator, what need of a *Mediator*? If he be not *depraved* and *undone*, what necessity of a *Restorer* and *Saviour*? If he is not *enslaved* to sin, why is he *redeemed* by Jesus Christ? If he is not *polluted*, why must he be *washed* in the blood of the *Lamb*? If his soul is not *disordered*, what occasion is there for a divine *Physician*? In a word, if he is not *born in sin*, why is a *new birth* so necessary, that Christ solemnly declares, without it no man can “see the kingdom of God?”—Let us then attend, in the second place, to

The present apostate state of man.

Satan, full of hatred to God, and envying the happiness of man, devised the method of his destruction, with infernal cunning. He assaulted “the weaker vessel” first: questioned, and then denied the word of God; represented the command, not to eat of the tree, as very severe; and the eating of it as quite harmless, yea, as highly advantageous. “Ye shall

not

not surely die," said the devil; though God had said, "Ye shall surely die." Thus Eve was deceived, and became the unhappy means of seducing her husband. Thus both our first parents fell from their original state of purity and bliss; and, as a token of God's dreadful displeasure, were banished from the garden of Eden.

But you must observe, that in, and by this fall of our first parents, all their posterity likewise fell. So, St. Paul assures us, Rom. v. 12. "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" and again, verse 15. "through the offence of one, many are dead:" and again, verse 18. "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."

In consequence of our fall in Adam, our nature is wholly corrupt. Our hearts are naturally carnal and worldly. We forsake God, the fountain of happiness; and vainly strive to make ourselves happy in sin and folly; or, as our text has it—"we have sought out many inventions"—many vain reasonings—many foolish questions and speculations! What are the numberless inventions of men, but weak and wicked attempts to procure happiness without God, and contrary to his will. What inventions to please the imagination! Hence the loads of novels which burden the world, and are read and relished far better than the word of truth. What inventions to delight the eyes! Hence plays, and shews, and all the vanity of dress. What inventions to please the ear! Hence all the charms of music, vocal and instrumental. What inventions to gratify the taste! Hence all the art of cookery, collecting niceties from every quarter of the

world. Of how many may it be said, that their kitchen is their temple, the cook their priest, and their belly their god. What inventions are there to kill time ! Short as life is, and we all complain it is so short, it drags on too slowly for many. Hence the various amusements, especially playing at cards, invented on purpose to kill time. Ah ! how soon will these murderers of time, wish for one of their lost hours, when time with them shall be no more. What inventions are there to gratify pride ! What contrivances to make us look greater and finer than our neighbours ! What inventions to become rich and great ; for this, men spend all their strength, and risk their health and life. What inventions to deceive one another, and to appear what we really are not !

But there are worse inventions still, in matters of religion. What inventions of doctrine ! How many teach, for divine truth, the commandments of men ! What inventions in the worship of God ! Hence all idolatry and superstition ; hateful to God, and hurtful to man. What inventions as to the way of acceptance with God ! There is but one true way, and that is Christ ; but instead of this, men have invented a thousand ways ; pretending by their own virtue, goodness, morality, charity, and devotion, to recommend themselves to God.

Not to dwell any longer on the word “inventions,” let us take a general view of man in his fallen state.

See, what ignorance veils his mind. How wretched and near to the state of brute beasts are millions of the human race ; the Indians of America, and the Blacks of Africa ! Yea, even in Europe, which is more enlightened ; and in England too ; a country full

full of churches and bibles ; O how many thousands are in darkness and the shadow of death ! Yes, even many of those who are scholars, and wise enough in worldly things, know not God, know not themselves, know not Jesus Christ. How many that seem to be religious, worship an " unknown God," being ignorant of their fallen state, and therefore ignorant of the salvation of the Redeemer.

But ignorance is not all. Consider the *carnality* of the mind. The heart is gone from God. It does " not like to retain God in its knowledge." How many are saying to God, " Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways : " and say, my brethren, Is it not so with some of you ? Why else is it that you do not love prayer ? Why do you neglect the bible ? Why do you break the sabbath ? Why do you take pleasure in the company of the wicked ; while you laugh at serious people, and true piety ? Your conscience sometimes smites you for this, for you know they are right, and you are wrong : and were you on a dying bed, you would gladly be in their state. You have an immortal soul, which you know must be saved for ever, or lost for ever, and yet you live as if you had no soul at all. And though religion be the great business of man, it is the only business that you neglect ; it is the only business that you hate to see others mind. And does not this convince you that you are carnal indeed ?

" Even a child is known by his doings ; " " foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," Prov. xx. 2. xxii. 15. Have you never observed the envy, pride, and passion of little children ? They could not learn these evil tempers from others. They brought them

them into the world with them. They were born in sin.

Look at young people. The seeds of sin which were in their nature, spring up and grow apace. The bud of vice now begins to blow. See the forward, rash youth, full of pride and self-conceit, despising his parents, impatient of controul, bursting every bond, that he may pursue his pleasures; and determined to indulge his lusts, though at the expence of health, character, and life itself. O who can lament, as it deserves, the shameful, the worse than brutal lewdness of both sexes! This vice awfully prevails; and though some may laugh at it, and think it a little sin, let them know, that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. 4.

What shall we say of *profaneness*? "Because of swearing the land mourneth;" the streets, the roads, the fields, the ale-houses, ring with the horrid language of hell. The throat of the swearer is "an open sepulchre," belching forth, in oaths and curses, a stench more hateful to God, than the smell of a human carcase to man. This is so common that we almost forget its criminality; but what saith the law? "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Surely this is a sin, which above most others, shews that man is wofully fallen and wicked; or how could he practise, how could he love, this unprofitable vice?

Time would fail us to speak of a thousand other evils which proceed out of the heart. Read the catalogue given by our Saviour himself, Matt. xx. 19. "Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy; these come forth from the heart, and they defile the man."

The scriptures abound with testimonies to this sad truth. Read the following, Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." See also, Gen. viii. 21. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Read also, Job xi. 12. "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt;" and chap. xv. 14. "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" And lest any should think that all people are not so bad, and that these things are said only of openly wicked persons, observe what the following scripture declares, Psalm xiv. 2, 3. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are *all* gone aside; they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good; no, *not one*." In a word, see the true picture of fallen man, in Jerem. xvii. 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Thus then, is this terrible, but useful truth, fully confirmed. None can deny it, without denying the word of God. But if these testimonies are not enough, turn your eyes to the state of mankind in this present evil world; and you will find sad proof that man is in a fallen state. Is not "the earth cursed for man's sake?" and why doth it bring forth so plentifully thorns and briars, while useful plants, and fruit, and grain, cannot be produced without great labour? The earth itself preaches to us this humbling doctrine,

doctrine, and while man gains his daily bread with the sweat of his brow, let him learn that sin is the fatal cause.

Sometimes the earth is deluged with dangerous floods. At other times it is hardened by excessive drought. Dreadful peals of thunder shake the heavens; fearful flashes of lightning fill the skies. Horrible earthquakes cleave the ground, and open a sudden grave for thousands. Burning mountains belch forth their destructive contents. The seas, raised to fury by stormy winds, bury the poor helpless seamen. Terrible plagues sweep away whole cities in a few days. What is the language of these fearful messengers? They all unite to say, Man is fallen, and God is angry.

Consider also, the sorrows of mothers in bringing forth their offspring: the cries, and tears, and pains, and death of little babes. Think of the various fierce and agonizing diseases of mankind. What is the world but a huge hospital, and where almost the house where there is not one sick? How many of our poor fellow-creatures are pining in poverty, or racked with pain, or raving with madness. Turn your eyes to the dying bed of a fellow mortal. Look at his ghastly countenance. See how he is convulsed; how he labours for life. At last, with a mournful groan, he bids adieu to this wretched world. Behold the pale and lifeless corpse. In a few days, perhaps in a few hours, it begins to change. Putrefaction seizes it, and the body, once so dear and pleasant; the parent, the wife, or the child, must be "buried out of our sight;" must be consigned to the dark, cold, and loathsome grave, to become the prey of sordid worms. What a terrible proof does all this afford of our sinful state!

IMPROVEMENT.

And now what shall we say to these things? Is this the state of man? How necessary is it that he should know it. We observed, at the beginning, that it is one of the first principles of our religion, and without knowing this, we cannot understand the rest. There are three things, the absolute necessity of which, we may learn from what has been said, namely, *Redemption, Repentance, and Regeneration.*

1. *Redemption.* God hates sin with infinite abhorrence. Sin renders us abominable in his sight. "The wages of sin is death." "He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." How then can we escape the damnation of hell? Blessed be God, he hath so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, to be our Redeemer and Saviour. Jesus Christ has died for sinners, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. By his blood reconciliation is made for iniquity; and by his Spirit our nature is renewed; so that we may be fully restored to the favour and image of God.

2. See also the need of *Repentance*, or such a sight and sense of sin, as leads to godly sorrow and self-abhorrence. Alas, how far from this are many, who yet call themselves christians. Hear the proud pharisee crying, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are;" or boasting that he has a good heart, and a clear conscience; that he does his duty to the best of his power, and never hurt any body in all his life. This is the wretched cant of poor, ignorant, deluded souls, who know not "the plague of their own heart." God forbid this should be our case.

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Let us rather, like all the good men we read of in scripture, confess our sins, loathe ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Then shall we thankfully receive the free mercy and forgiving love of God through Jesus Christ.

3. From hence also we learn the necessity of *Regeneration*. If we are born in sin, we must be born again. So our Saviour solemnly declared to Nicodemus, John iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must have a new heart; that is, a new disposition of heart; such a change within, as may be justly called a new creation. And this is far more than the baptism of water. We must be "born of water and of the Holy Ghost;" that is, we must experience the power of the Spirit on our minds, which is like that of water on the body, to cleanse and purify it from sin. Water, in baptism, is "the outward visible sign," but there is also, "an inward and spiritual grace," and this is, "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

How important then is the knowledge of our fallen state! May the Holy Spirit so bless what has now been said concerning it, that, discovering the disease of our nature, we may highly prize the great physician of souls; may lie low before a holy God in the dust of humiliation; yet looking up for pardoning mercy, and for sanctifying grace, daily to renew us in the spirit of our minds; till, being made meet for heaven, we are admitted into that blessed state, where sin and sorrow shall be known no more; and where, with all the redeemed, we shall celebrate our glorious recovery from the ruins of the fall, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.